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October 14, 1986

**S/CT PRESS GUIDANCE****LEBANON HOSTAGES: "NEWSWEEK" STORY**

**Q: Any comment on the "Newsweek" story entitled "America's Forgotten Hostages?"**

**A: -- WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE FAMILIES OF THE AMERICAN HOSTAGES HAVE BEEN PUT THROUGH AN AGONIZING AND EMOTIONAL ORDEAL, AND WE DEEPLY SYMPATHIZE WITH THEM.**

**-- THE IMPLICATION IN THE "NEWSWEEK" STORY THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS FORGOTTEN THESE HOSTAGES IS WRONG. THE ADMINISTRATION IS DOING ALL THAT IT CAN TO SECURE THE SAFE RELEASE OF THESE AMERICANS, AND WE CONTINUE TO WORK HARD AND FOLLOW EVERY LEAD ON THIS PRIORITY ISSUE.**

**Q: Have the hostages been beaten?**

**A: -- WE HAVE HEARD REPORTS OF BRUTALITY BY THE KIDNAPPERS. WE REPEAT THAT WE HOLD THE KIDNAPPERS FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SAFETY OF ALL THE AMERICANS WHO ARE HELD.**

**we know where the hostages are?**

**A: -- WE DO NOT KNOW WHERE THE HOSTAGES ARE AT THIS TIME.**

Partially Declassified, released on 1/24/88  
under provision of E.O. 12356  
by B. Roger, National Security Council

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Q: Can you confirm that the kidnappers belong to the Mugniyah family, part of the Musawi clan, and that some of the prisoners they want released from Kuwait are their cousins?

A: -- WE ARE AWARE OF A POSSIBLE FAMILY CONNECTION BETWEEN THE KIDNAPPERS AND SOME OF THE PRISONERS THEY WANT RELEASED FROM KUWAIT. (NO FURTHER COMMENT ON THIS.)

Q: Would the kidnappers settle for the release of three Lebanese Shiites held by Kuwait instead of all 17 Dawu-  
prisoners?

A: -- THE KIDNAPPERS DO NOT RESPOND TO OUR LONGSTANDING OFFER OF DIRECT DISCUSSIONS. BECAUSE OF THEIR REFUSAL, WE REMAIN UNAWARE OF ANY CHANGE IN THEIR DEMANDS. -- THE QUESTION IS NOT WHETHER WE WOULD SEEK THE RELEASE OF 3 OR 17 PRISONERS. WE WILL NOT NEGOTIATE THE EXCHANGE OF INNOCENT AMERICANS FOR THE RELEASE FROM PRISON OF TRIED AND CONVICTED MURDERERS HELD IN A THIRD COUNTRY, NOR WILL WE PRESSURE OTHER NATIONS TO DO SO. TO MAKE SUCH CONCESSIONS WOULD JEOPARDIZE THE SAFETY OF OTHER AMERICAN CITIZENS AND WOULD ONLY ENCOURAGE MORE TERRORISM.

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Q: Did the U.S. ever demand that the families keep quiet or the hostages would be killed?

A: - WE HAVE NEVER DEMANDED THAT THE FAMILIES REMAIN SILENT. WHAT WE HAVE TRIED TO STRESS IN MEETINGS WITH THE FAMILIES IS THAT PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF OUR EFFORTS TO GAIN THE HOSTAGES' RELEASE COULD LEAD ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE KIDNAPPERS IN LEBANON THAT THE U.S. MIGHT SUCCEED TO THE PRESSURE AND TO CRIMINALS ELSEWHERE AROUND THE WORLD THAT AMERICANS ARE FAIR GAME.

Q: Did the U.S. tell Peggy Say during the TWA 847 hijacking "not to even ask for Terry and the others (hostages), and don't say anything to connect your hostage to the TWA ones?"

A: ~~DURING THE TWA HIJACKING, THE DEPARTMENT WAS~~  
~~OPERATING A 24 HOUR CASE ROOM, AND WE COULD KNOW THE~~  
~~THE FACT IS~~  
 THAT EACH GROUP OF HOSTAGES WAS BEING HELD INDEPENDENT OF THE OTHER GROUP, AND THE U.S. WAS WORKING TO RESOLVE BOTH SITUATIONS SEPARATELY. WE HAD HOPED THAT THE TWA INCIDENT COULD BE USED AS A CATALYST TO FREE ALL THE REMAINING HOSTAGES, AND WE WORKED AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS TO BRING THAT ABOUT. UNFORTUNATELY, WE WERE UNSUCCESSFUL.

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Q: Did the U.S. ever withhold from the hostage families letters written by the hostages?

A: -- WE HAVE NEVER WITHHELD SUCH LETTERS FROM THE HOSTAGE FAMILIES.

Q: Did Libya purchase and subsequently murder three hostages following the U.S. military strike in April?

A: -- THAT REPORT IS NOT NEW. FOLLOWING THE MURDER OF TWO BRITISH HOSTAGES IN APRIL, BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY HOWE PUBLICLY IMPLICATED LIBYA.

Drafted: S/CT:JReap

Doc. 0018J

Cleared: S/CT:LPBremar

S/CT:PWborg

CA/OCS:JAdams

NEA/ARN:JMcVerry

NEA/P:ABerger

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